CutBank

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where the big fish lie...

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COVER ART: *Honduras #2* by R. David Wilson

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Please address all correspondence to: *CutBank*, Department of English, University of Montana, Missoula, MT 59812
E-mail: cutbank@selway.umt.edu
On the web: http://www.umt.edu/cutbank/

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Saskia Hamilton

Inside

First, there was the fifth mistake.

What you would take for the truth was no longer

supportable. Then came the dark, with its truncheon. The table

was trustworthy. It withstood the trembling of the house

when the trucks passed and the road broke some more.

The dread presaged the next thing, it is true,

but what it is not is what it said, what it will not

be is what it said. One abstraction

muscles into another, without a system, without

a sound to sketch on paper except for these

instances and occasions: not even a half-hour piece;

a ten minute piece, while the kettle is on the boil.

Saskia Hamilton

Even Though They Have Vanished

It is thought pressing the sides
of the cup. Thought
tightening the wires of the breath.
The wind, the engine,
the radiator stirring, the filaments
trembling, the instruments
maintaining
pressure on the silence, as if it, too,
had to be put to work.
We will get through this.
We might not get through this.
Meanwhile, the body changes
imperceptibly,
adjusts to gravity.

Alex Lemon

The Best Part

of brain surgery isn't the shining
staples that keep it all in,

the attraction fingers and tongues
have to the scar. It's not the wheelchair rides

through maple leaves, sunlight warming
a bruised skull as I fumble peeling

an orange. Nor is it the gentle tug
of a nurse reminding muscles — bend,

stretch and flex. The sweetest ingredient
is the cutting. Hollow space that longs

to be filled with love for what little
I may have. The first bite, cold

fruit. Bed-ridden, I weigh my glass-
eye in a wrinkle-mapped hand.

Patrick Moran

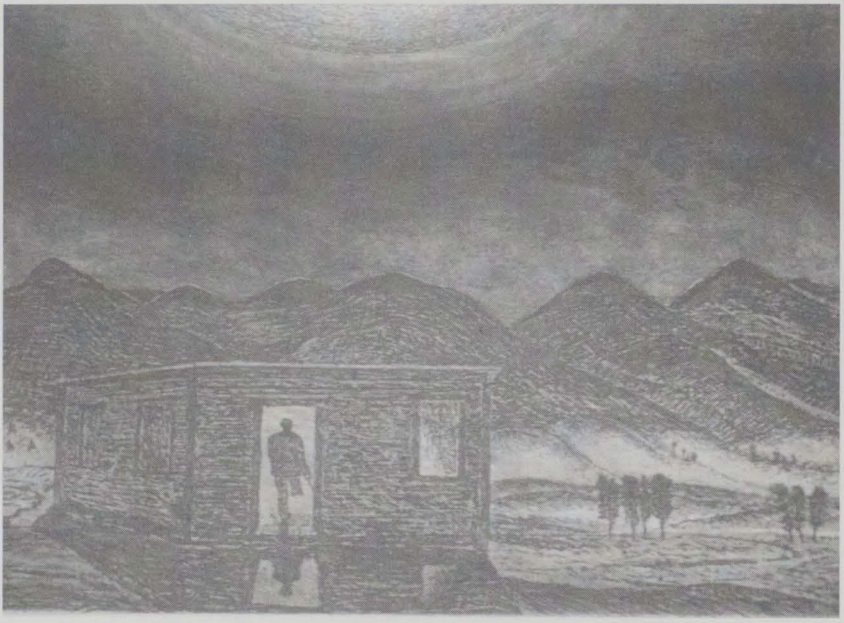
A Pin Called Home

Tonight emptiness will work.
I'll be empty and you can be gone.
The house will sit on the head of a pin
and the street light can be my cigarettes.
The wind will be someone known
for his breath, not his words,
and the night sky will be a shirt
you still think about wearing but never
get around to sewing the last button on,
which is obviously the moon.
Full moon, half moon, new moon.
I think you were the landscape last night
and the night before that I was a weather vane.
Do you remember when we were
a stack of newspapers and you were on top?
Weren't we happy? Or was it just
the ink and the headlines, the obituaries
and the horoscope? They were so sure
it was going to rain. Do you remember
the funny way they told everyone
to bring an umbrella? Cats and dogs...
Everything was practically canceled.
Everyone believed that the cats and the dogs
were on their way, but you and I,
we rode some bicycles to an orchard,
we laid down in the grass, we hardly spoke.
I can remember that tonight as I smoke
another street light, as I turn toward
the wind that smells like rain, the rain
that you seem so capable of being
whether or not I am here sitting quietly
on the head of this pin we call home.

Patrick Moran

Shit on a Shingle

I said I'd walk a mile in her shoes if she
walked a mile in mine, but of course we
were barefoot and exhausted and before
the distance of a mile could be agreed upon
and before some shoes could be found
we forgot all about our little bet. In almost
no time at all she demanded to know what
I was doing in her bedroom. I panicked
because it's what I like to do in these
situations. There's nothing like a good panic
I said in my shakiest voice. A little hysterics
goes a long way she agreed. Just then
the phone should have rung or the electricity
should have failed. We waited for our
dilemmas like perfect strangers wait for
perfect strangeness. My watch stopped.
She stifled a yawn. Eventually we got
around to discussing the weather as if we
were farmers or botanists at a horse show.
Now she calls me her little shit on a shingle,
and I call her my erstwhile fragment of bliss.



Murder

...YOU NOTICE THE FORMS FAR UP the road, a pickup truck on the shoulder, hazards blinking, the exhaust coughing dirty clouds, and the fields on either side of you ripple with snowy, wind-sculpted dunes, and the morning sun, swelled and heavy, shines brilliantly on the white expanse, and you squint against the glare and stab your cigarette into an ashtray already brimming with crumpled butts, then you cough and cough and cough, deep, dredging spasms that end when you spit blood into your waiting handkerchief....

A two-foot length of lead pipe. When you were done, there were stringy blonde hairs stuck to the metal. Pink strips of flesh embedded in the grooved threads.

... wipe the blood from your lips and stuff the handkerchief back into your pocket, and your vision isn't what it used to be (the letters at the bottom half of your ophthalmologist's chart squirm like minnows in muddy water), and there are no other cars on the road, the cows penned up in the distant barns, a barren vista populated by just you, the blurry figures behind the idling pickup, and a knot of circling crows, and you crack your window and the numbing air whistles in your ear — closer now — and the twitching minnows arrange themselves into a strange focus, a man and a boy struggling to hoist a weighted tarp onto the pickup's open gate — closer — the two of them wearing hats and gloves, stained winter jackets, and over their mouths and noses, they've tied bandanas whose triangled ends twitter in the breeze, and as you pass, you spot the stiff-limbed doe peeking from the tarp's covering, and in a speed-blurred glimpse, you see the other carcasses lining the truck's bed, a snout-speckled heap of rigid paws and hooves....

Stutterers shouldn't tell jokes, but Gill did, and his hiccupping rhythms swelled as he neared his soon-to-be butchered punch lines. "Be-be-because she's my sis-sis-sis-sister!" At the bar, you'd seen more than one man bail out in mid-joke, poor Gill abandoned in a socially mortifying freefall, his stutter left to

fizzle itself out in the vacated, smoky space. But you always stuck out his jokes, even the long ones with endings you already knew. Maybe you were a sucker; maybe you were something else, but there you'd be, half-listening, then not listening at all, your eyes drawn to the way his uneasy hands bothered with his cigarette, a toothpick, the collar-smothering mane of his sandy mullet. You met Gill at the Wednesday night dart league ("Con-con-concentrate, Gill!" the opposing team would chide when he stepped to the line in a tight game), and in the dark alley behind the bar, he'd pop his trunk and glance fretfully about as you and the other players surveyed the still-boxed electronics (or shoes, power tools, sewing machines...) he offered for half of what the department stores charged. Once, you bought a winter coat for your daughter; another time, a bracelet for your wife — but most nights you said no, thanks anyway, and then felt like a sucker every time you opened your wallet at the mall.

... study the dwindling scene in your rearview, and you've heard the local department of transportation pays by the pound for roadkill, but since you've never known anyone who's actually bothered with the stench and mess, you'd assumed the story was bullshit (after all, you know men who've done seriously fucked-up things for money — the monthly plasma sellers, the ones who pen bad checks on their invalid mothers' accounts, the mail frauders and welfare scammers), and far behind you, the pickup, its hazards still blinking, lurches onto the road....

The first time Gill brought up the loading docks where you worked, you laughed off his daydreamer's math of how much the two of you could make on a skid of Levis or a crate of Lucky Strikes. To you, these things were simply boxes in a day filled with boxes, transient burdens waiting to be piled onto the next eighteen-wheeler, but when you received a mistyped invoice for spools of copper wiring, you called Gill. In the dark of an early December night, your only company the warehouse rats and the lone security guard drunk again in the heated office, you and Gill wrestled the uncounted spools into a panel truck. Gill stammered excitedly about your coming windfall as you drove through town, his bubble-snapping wad of gum exacerbating his stutter, his gloved hands attacking the truck's vibrating gearshift with a

spastic rhythm that had you stalling at every stop sign. Your thoughts drifted back to your wife and daughter asleep in your tiny apartment, and you wished you were with them, dreaming this predawn scene of empty streets and blinking traffic lights. The heavy spools rolled with each turn, and you feared the truck was one steering wheel jerk away from tipping over, your dream crumbling into a nightmare of bloody police strobes, questions asked, nonexistent papers requested. With morning's first purplish hint breaking over the hills, you dropped the spools at a deserted construction site across the river, your getaway delayed when you lost a boot in the ankle-deep mud.

... near the river, the pastures give way to steep wooded hills, and the sun flinches behind the ridge's skeletal branches, the valleys shadowed and the road spotted with black ice, and you check your watch and figure you should reach the hospital in twenty minutes, a trip made because your daughter has just given birth to a seven-pound boy, your first grandchild, and she called last night from the delivery room, her voice fatigued and ecstatic, and asked if you'd like to visit this morning, a timetable you suspect has been arranged to keep you from crossing paths with your ex-wife, and you say, "Sure, honey, I'll be there," hanging up before asking the baby's name, and alone in your trailer, the windows' plastic coverings twitching with the night's frigid gusts, the air polluted by cigarette smoke and the kerosene heater's gassy stink, you swallowed some pills and drank until you passed out....

With your two thousand split, you covered three months of rent and car payments, and then used the rest to splurge on Christmas gifts. For days, you discovered curls of ribbon between the sofa cushions, crinkled tissue paper wads beneath the tables and chairs. New Year's Eve, the tree lights glimmering in a nearly emptied bottle of French wine, your wife asleep with her head on your lap and the floor strewn with haphazard piles of unwrapped gifts, you silently congratulated yourself. This, you thought with a smile, must be how lottery winners felt, the flipside of life's bad breaks and unanswered prayers. The outgoing invoice numbers were never questioned, and as winter wore on, you'd chat with Gill at Wednesday night's dart league. Gill had gotten into coke, his scraggly mustache often powdered white,

his stutter chemically agitated into a spit-producing, percolating labor. Some nights you'd snort a line or two with him off the condom machine in the bar's mildewed bathroom, but when he got around to asking about the latest shipments at the docks, you quickly changed the subject back to hunting and darts.

... you light another cigarette, four drags before your cough returns, and when you finally stop and wipe the tears from your eyes, you spot a dead dog on the shoulder, a big dog, a retriever or a setter, its matted fur bristling in the breeze, a sunshine glint on the collar's metal tag, and perhaps the man and boy will claim the dog later, another parcel of rotting meat for their truck bed, and before the next odometer tick, you pass a belly-up squirrel, a mangled possum — has the deep snow forced these animals to forage along the road or maybe they've always been there, your eyes oblivious to the carnage....

The Wednesday night bartender was the one who let slip that Gill had given you the shaft, an offhand joke as he worked the taps how Gill should be the one paying for the night's rounds after the eight large he'd made on some construction site deal. You'd been blindsided before, gotten beaned by a fastball in your high school baseball days, had three ribs cracked by a dropped two-by-four, but you'd never had the wind knocked out of you like you did that night, your white knuckles gripping the bar railing, your bones as brittle as November cornstalks. You said nothing, declined Gill's offer to check out the wristwatches and Cabbage Patch dolls waiting in his trunk, but over the next few days, the knowledge of his betrayal festered beneath your winter-pale skin. You'd been the one who'd told him about the spools, the one who'd risked his job, who'd balanced his family's well-being atop Gill's tee-tee-teetering schemes. That Saturday, you confronted Gill in the windowless garage he rented outside town, the unheated space crammed with car stereos and new, rubber-fragrant tires. The lead pipe lay on a workbench littered with pot seeds and coke-smudged cassette cases, and you were only aware of the first blow, the pipe striking Gill's temple before he could raise his fluttering hands in defense. After that, the metal-on-flesh thuds reached you in fading echoes, the sound of a bass-thumping radio being played in a distant room (did you hit him

three times? a dozen?). When you were done, the pipe slipped from your fingers, struck the concrete with a loud ping, and rolled lazily — the garage filled with its hollow, metallic song — until it came to rest against Gill's motionless body.

Remembering a scene from a movie (but had the character gotten away with his crime?), you mopped bleach over the far-flung bloodstains. You wrapped the pipe and body in the white shower curtain Gill had rigged up to hide his metal shelves stocked with triple-beam scales and the bottles of baby laxative he used to stretch a quarter ounce of coke into a half. Then you slumped against a cold wall, gagging on the bleach's chlorine stink, your jackrabbity heart bounding in your chest.

You turned off the lights to deter the coke-seekers and bargain hunters, but the knocks still came, and each jiggle of the locked handle squeezed the breath from your lungs. In gray degrees, the shrouded form lying beside your bloodstained boots separated itself from its murky surroundings until it seemed the white vinyl radiated its own faint glow.

The shovel rattled in the backseat and your headlights jittered ahead over the logging road's rutted grooves. The trunk's weight shifted with every wheel-bucking bump. The pines and firs stretched over you, the moon and stars choked from the sky, the air thick and cool and utterly still. You parked and killed the lights. The body balanced over your right shoulder, the shovel clutched in your left hand, you set off into the woods.

Your father had shown you the trappers' footpath that followed a seasonal creek down to the river. You walked the trail for fifty yards and turned abruptly into the brush. Your father had died the year before, and you wondered, despite your lack of beliefs, if he was somehow near you now.

Gill had always seemed so insubstantial, bird-like with his slight build and nervous tics, a guy you outweighed by a good fifty pounds, but now your shoulders burned as you weaved your way through the thick growth. Saplings clawed at your legs, and the pine branches swatted your face. You waved the shovel before you and cursed the darkness. You thought of the trail and panicked, fearing your staggering path might prevent you from finding your way back to the car. The body fell with a muffled

thud, and you stood over the faintly radiating cocoon, the panting bellows of your lungs the only sound to reach your ears. The digging proved harder than you'd expected, the earth bothered by roots and stones, and you had to fold the stiffening body, knees to chest, to fit the tiny hole.

... mountains of dirty, plowed snow hem the vast hospital parking lot, and after two laps you find a space, your ill-timed engine shuddering into silence, and you unscrew the lid of the pint bottle stashed beneath your seat and throw back a shot, then another, and outside, quick steps propel you across the macadam, and you spit a dark, red glob on a cinder-crusted snowbank and the biting wind snakes up your pant legs, the cold tingling on the dewy alcohol residue around your lips, and the sun disappears behind the hospital, your body shivering in the shadow's temperature drop, and you shovel gum into your mouth, hoping the minty flavor will mask the taste of whiskey and blood, and as you near the entrance, navigate your way between the wheelchair-bound, the crutch-users, the bandaged and bruised, and the entrance's double-set of automatic doors whisper hello, the lobby's warmth tickling your stuffed nose, and you ask for directions at the main desk, make a stop in the perfume-scented gift shop for an overpriced teddy bear and a balloon that proclaims *It's a boy!* in blue, curlicue letters, and in the main corridor your ridiculous balloon bobs above your head, your steps slowed by a pair of bed-pushing orderlies, their oblivious, IV-tethered cargo as white as the bed's sheets, and you study the other passing eyes, the dazed and mournful and relieved, the work-a-day weariness of doctors and nurses and maintenance workers, and how unreal the place seems, this man-made cusp between life and death, and the elevator lights flash, a climbing of floors and a tally of heavenly pings, and the nurse standing beside you brushes your arm as she exits, the cinnamon smell of her coffee lingering after the chrome doors shut, and finally, it's your turn, and you step off and all you have to do is follow the muffled cries, and you count seven behind the nursery's thick window glass, all swaddled tight, their scrunched heads topped with knitted caps the color of ice cream, and some cry, some sleep, while the one nearest you blinks his clouded eyes against

the assault of harsh light....

The next day you burned your clothes in a rusted drum behind the loading dock. The wind whipped the flames, and the swirling smoke stung your eyes, the thinning, gray ribbon climbing into a slate sky. Weeks passed, months, and the knock on the door that had kept you up at night never materialized. At the bar, you overheard rumors about Gill's disappearance, the most prevalent speculation that he'd run off to Florida after burning a couple of Jamaicans in a coke deal. With each passing year, you think of him less ... and more.

The fear that once consumed you has distilled into something more subtle, something finer and grittier, an ashy scrim through which your days are filtered. Food doesn't taste as good as it once did, and the bar's jukebox has lost its power to make you sing along.

Unwelcome images of Gill's decomposing body sometimes drift into your thoughts. Alone in your bed, you have pictured the rotting flesh and the feasting of worms, the slightly richer shade of green for the grave's grass. And some nights, you pull back further, rising over his grave, above the fragrant pines and firs, and you imagine the mice that ate the worms and the coyotes that snapped up the mice, and you feel as if Gill's carbon-laced residue has been spread as far as you can see.

Would you have forgiven him by now? On some level at least? Perhaps you'd still play darts with him. Perhaps you'd still be married. Perhaps you wouldn't need booze to fall asleep each night. Perhaps your daughter would call you more than once a month. Perhaps nothing. Perhaps everything.

... your daughter, propped in her hospital bed, smiles at you, sweat-teased curls springing from her hair, the tips brushing her flushed cheeks, and there's a nurse there, the room so small you have to wedge yourself into a corner so she can finish changing the boy's diaper and all you can really see at first is a pair of improbably tiny, needle-pricked heels cradled in the nurse's tender grip, and when she's done swaddling the boy in a sky blue blanket, she steps aside and there's your grandson in a glass crib hardly bigger than a shoebox and he isn't crying, not a peep, and you study the peaceful face, the puffy, slitted eyes and cone-shaped

head, a single finger reaching out of the swaddling blanket, and your daughter says, "Hold him, Dad," as she reaches onto the nightstand for an instamatic camera, and you slide your hands under the barely stirring bundle, your callused palm cradling the boy's neck and head, and as you lean over, you listen to the glass-trapped echo of his breathing — a sound high-pitched, congested, shallow, and persistent, his tiny lungs fighting to adjust to a strange world, and carefully, carefully, you bring the bundle closer to your chest, and when your bodies meet, you think about the purity of a soul without secrets or sin, and you think about the new generation of dart-throwers at the bar who've never heard Gill's stutter, never sifted through his trunk's improbable treasures, and a teary welling mingles with the blood in your throat, and your hands tremble when you bring the boy closer and kiss his smooth, round cheek, and as the camera flashes, you cry softly for him and for yourself, cry for the living and the dead and the fateful roads a man travels between the two....

Lacy Schutz

Dying Was the Best Thing That Happened to Elvis

As usual, we were lunching
at The Manor Diner the day
the King's own line of candy
came out: Bits o' Elvis

in a tin with a shot
of his head on the top.
He slumped into the restaurant
a little late. Settled in

beside me in the booth.
He showed off the cartons
of candies: Licorice-Peanut Butter
Swirl. Bacon Bites. Fried Banana.

I just picked the kind of things
I like to eat, he said.

Elvis had chicken fried steak
with a side of meatloaf
then went outside to call
his agent from a pay phone.

We watched him through
the plate glass windows,
jiggling the tins like marimbas.

David J. Daniels

Breakfasts in the Suburbs

Meant pork of standardized hue & extrusion.

In every what we called *blanket*, pork
in its pure moniker *pig*.

Pork, then pork, then more pork,

& when the pork was gone,
more pork was ushered in
to fill its syrupy grave. More pork

than seems, in retrospect,
essential for a child.

In the suburbs every child
was *the* child. Even gravy
was pork in a thick disguise, was

pork incognito.
Gravy was pork at heart.

Breakfasts in the suburbs meant
vinyl placemats of the fifty states

where you rested your
sticky elbows at prayer, states
all colorized with personality,

with a hefty flower or luscious
nut or bird that said
Please visit us!

Meant sad Alaska.

Meant a father who prayed
in unison to the father
next door who prayed

like perfectly die-cut
replicants & block after block
of the lengthening tribute

to moms made out of silence —

oh Mom!

Daneen Wardrop

At Klein's Bagels, Coffee Is Only a Dollar With Unlimited Refills

The guy with the water glass sees only corners around his glass.
The bent-over man wants change.

We're getting comfortable here, lounge like famous people.

One whole wall is a sofa of us not-famous people.

When I think back to childhood, I remember
sofa tapestry end table lamp —
as if each object were dipped in cleanser, scoured,
then placed back into the picture.

From the table next to me —
"what you're doing is cueing" —
"at the moment, you say, I want one to three to five" —
"you have to figure out which light reaches the eye" —

Famous people shower in light cues.
No matter what I say my family was not famous to ourselves.

Take your time to relax, quite a while and relax, okay now it's
time to relax, re-

And the word *quite*? — q*uitus*, unmolested, free, clear,
etc.
But the sun's been quite kind while I wrote this song

—lax.

Eating marshmallows for meat,
the famous never sit in picture windows, only pass them.
Some people can make their strides strobe.

It may be quite simple but now that it's done

Sun shines collar-buckle tongues through the cafe windows
Sun shines bicycle baskets through the windows
Sun shines (it's a strong pane of glass)

Famous people relax their hair, they do it all the time.

Daneen Wardrop

We Wait for the Trolly Which in Chicago Is Free

Pedestrians pull sax-notes out of the street musician's sax.

Airconditioner drips air out of the rusty box.

So what if the towers, the buildings, all turn into sound?

Famous people think behind their sunglasses.

We could have a manatee come live in our tub,
my daughter says. No speedboat propellers in our tub, nuh-uh.

title: animals subtitle: famous people
cat confers fame on a projected circle of flashlight moving, panda confers fame on any one
bamboo shoot in the paw, flamingos on the folded leg, manatees floating—

title: endangered animals subtitle: fame
the more one the more the other—

El tracks cut a hungry tilt.

It goes over us as we think of how the sandwich today was on the oniony side.

A good man gives us directions that match the ribbons of streets.

Tenderness, a case-by-case.
This is true, this is true as hunger.

Some famous people wrap their coats thus and such.

I saw Robert Kennedy once in the subway beneath the
Congress building,

his hair looked just like his.

A Picture of Jayne Mansfield

ELLEN STEPPED DOWN INTO THE DARKNESS carefully, around the cans of paint on her cellar steps — her knees bent, her back straight, her hands pushed flat against the walls of the narrow stairway.

Tai chi, she said to herself. It feels like I'm doing tai chi.

She was going to the cellar to prove a point. Somewhere, there was a picture of her as a girl, standing next to Jayne Mansfield. Nobody at her party believed her.

The people talking in her kitchen had moved on to other topics. She knew when she returned with the picture nobody would really care and any one of the men would probably say hey, which one is Jayne Mansfield and everybody would laugh, but it was still something she had to do.

At the bottom of the steps, she dusted her hands then tucked them under her armpits. Halfway back, under the living room now, she found a light that worked, and when she turned it on, she could see across the back half of the ancient cellar, all the way to the bulkhead.

Everything they had ever owned was in the cellar, all their old furniture and clothes, skis, books, kids' bikes and band equipment, Tim's home brewing junk and neglected workshop. There were three metal filing cabinets by the bulkhead, packed with pictures, awards, old schoolwork, taxes. Somewhere near the cabinets was a stack of boxes Ellen had moved from her parents' house. Jayne Mansfield was in one of those boxes.

The day they bought this house, Tim came home from work early to oversee the inspection. He had worn a pair of coveralls over his suit and walked around the empty basement with the inspection guy, poking old beams with a screwdriver.

"This foundation isn't going anywhere," he had said, slapping one of the great stones with the flat of his hand.

I guess not, Ellen said to herself. It's got a house sitting on top of it.

Now she shuffled toward the back, turning sideways in the tight places.

She could hear people talking above her, moving around her living room. She opened a duffel bag. Inside was her son's old wrestling gear — headpiece, shoes, warm-up sweats. She put her face close to the opening and breathed again the smells of Saturday tournaments, carloads of rowdy boys.

Near the bulkhead was a Whirlpool box Ellen had painted for her daughter, with a curved doorway and "Princess Stephanie" written above it in silver glitter. She remembered the inside of the cardboard playhouse, decorated with pictures of unicorns.

She crawled into the dark box. Inside, on her knees, she looked at the drawings of winged horses cut from coloring books and taped like pin-ups on the walls of the little girl's castle.

Something moved beside her right leg. Ellen looked down.

A snake the size of a spare tire looked back at her. Eyes like glass in the dust.

It moved toward her. Ellen screamed and dove for daylight, but her hips were jammed in the small opening and she pulled the box over, on top of herself. Kicking and shrieking, she lay on the cellar floor, trying to get free of the Whirlpool box.

The room above her went silent, then she heard footsteps running across the house, toward the cellar steps.

The snake untangled itself and moved slowly across the cold floor, toward the stacks of boxes.

People piled down the stairs.

"El. Is that you?"

"I just saw a snake. Tim, there's a snake in the basement."

"No. It was probably just the cat, or something."

"Tim, I know the difference between a cat and a snake. What's it doing in here?"

"I don't know. Where is it now?"

"It went over there." She waved her hand toward the bulkhead. Her elbow hurt from rolling around on the hard floor.

The word passed back up the stairway. "Ellen climbed in a box with a snake, and now she's all freaked out."

"You'll never find him," said one of the guys. "You've got to take everything out of the basement — into the back yard — and go through everything, a box at a time. He could be anywhere."

"How's he staying alive?"

"It's winter. He's hibernating. Anyway, they don't eat until Spring. I say just leave him alone. Wait 'til it warms up. He'll leave."

"What if it's a female, and she has babies down there?" asked one of the women.

Ellen went upstairs to the bedroom. She sat on her side of the bed.

After awhile, Tim came up. He stood in front of her.

"I went through everything, and I can't find it," he said. "I'm sure it's gone — probably the way it came in. Are you coming back down? Everybody is asking."

"No."

"What were you doing down there, anyway?"

"I was looking for my picture of Jayne Mansfield."

He stood with his hands in his pockets, then he took his right hand out of his pants and set it on her shoulder.

"I thought we weren't going to be so dramatic," he said. "I'm going back downstairs."

She didn't look at him. She moved her shoulder sideways.

After he left, she went into their bathroom, took off her blouse and looked in the mirror at the backside of her elbow. She flexed her arm like she was doing french curls, then she wiggled her wrist like she was testing a doorknob. The underside of her arm moved like an udder, so she stopped.

She undressed, then put on her pajamas and robe. As she walked across the upstairs hallway, she could hear the people downstairs. Dishes were being stacked in the sink, someone was pushing a chair across her kitchen floor. No one was talking. The music was still playing.

She went to her daughter's old bedroom. The door still had a poster of winged horses flying around a pastel castle in the clouds. She shut the door and wandered around the room, pok-

ing through the closet, looking again under the cushion where Stephanie used to hide her diary. She brushed a dusty web off the ceiling with her slipper. She pushed the chest of drawers tight against the door, then she pulled back the covers on her daughter's bed and lay down. She got up again and picked up as many stuffed animals as she could carry. She arranged them around herself on the bed and pulled the covers high, up close to her chin.

Ellen remembered when she was fourteen and her father told her about the new mall in Worcester. Let's go, you and me. Jayne Mansfield will be there. She used to be a big movie star. You can buy some things.

One end of the food court was roped off and a lot of men were standing in front of a small stage. Her father was standing at front center, with his knees touching the edge, his overcoat unbuttoned and one of his hands in the pocket of his trousers. He had a cigarette in the corner of his mouth and he was staring at the door to the ladies' room.

Ellen watched from the mezzanine where she could see the stage, her father, and the ladies' room door.

Show music started playing and a man in a red jacket came to the microphone.

"Okay, okay," he said. "Welcome to the new Spring Hill Mall."

He talked for a few minutes about how much fun everybody was having and how important the mall was. More men crowded around the stage, the music got louder, the man in the red jacket threw coupons into the crowd.

Ellen watched her father. Around him, at his elbows, people jostled and talked, and pushed against the lip of the metal riser. He never moved, never let his eyes slide from the door behind the stage, as if it would open to his will.

"Alright," said the man. "And here to help us dedicate Worcester County's newest and biggest mall is a young lady who's pretty big in her own right." He jiggled his eyebrows and showed teeth.

"Ladies and gentlemen. Straight from her engagement in Las Vegas — the one, the only, Miss Jayne Mansfield."

Her father stretched to get a better view as the door opened and three men wearing top hats, black pants and white shirts ran out and jumped onto the stage. The three men danced and shook their canes at each other and the audience. They pretended to sing along with the tape.

The music got louder, the men dropped to their knees and aimed their canes at the ladies' room, where a large, tired-looking woman appeared suddenly as if she was pushed from behind.

Ellen watched her father as the woman straggled loosely to the microphone, holding up her meaty arms and cocking her hip.

Close enough to touch her, he watched, motionless, as she danced and sang and lumped around the tiny stage with the three bouncing men. Without looking at his hands, he lit a second cigarette and blew clouds of smoke that eased around the dancing woman. She sang theme songs and bobbled back and forth. When she finished, she bowed deeply in front of him, threw kisses, then went back to the ladies' room.

Ellen and her father sat on orange chairs for an hour, waiting for the movie star to come out of the bathroom.

Ellen sat with her legs together, her parka zipped to her chin. She held the bags of new clothes tight to her chest, including the one with the real bra. She prayed her father wouldn't ask to see what she bought with his money.

Her father sat, bent over with his elbows on his wide-open knees like a man on the toilet, smoking and flicking ashes from his cigarette on the floor of the new mall.

"Not being a woman," he said, "I've got my own opinions." He took a long pull on his cigarette. "The way I see it, looks without brains beats brains without looks. Know what I mean?"

Ellen nodded to a spot on the floor several feet in front of her father.

"Like this one," he said, waving his smoke at the ladies' room. "She got lucky. Any guy would kill himself to show her a good time."

From the side, her father looked like a different person.

"This would make more sense if you were a boy," he said. "I don't know about girls, but this is the way boys think. I guess that's my point."

On the long drive home, the Polaroid picture lay on the seat between them. The shot was centered on the pasty film star. Ellen was partly off-frame, her arm and shopping bag cropped by the border.

She remembered how the woman smelled as they stood shoulder-to-shoulder, smiling for her father — like hairspray, smoke and spearmint.

"Thank you, honey," Jayne Mansfield had said, after the flash.

"Okay," said Ellen.

"No, thank *you*," said her father, lowering the camera, smiling gamely at the woman and ignoring his daughter.

Ellen lay curled on her daughter's bed, under the pile of soft toys, listening to the people downstairs. The rustling of winter coats shuffling toward the door, the abrupt burst of contrived goodbyes. They were leaving early. Tell Ellen this, tell Ellen that, they were saying. Sorry, sorry, sorry.

Ellen rolled toward the wall. The thin bed shuddered with her quiet cries.

Downstairs, Tim marched through the house, fortifying — turning off lights, locking doors. He came up the stairs and stopped in front of their lost daughter's room.

"El," he said. "Everybody's gone. You can come out now."

He stood outside the door, waiting for something.

Ellen made herself smaller in the dark.

"Okay," he said. "I'll be in our room if you need me."

She heard the television and the sounds of her husband in the bathroom. From the TV came sounds of a man and woman talking. Set-up and punchline. Thrust and parry. The rush of phony laughter.

George Saunders, author of Pastoralia *and* CivilWarLand in Bad Decline*, among other titles, talks with* CutBank *about writing and life.*

Interview with George Saunders

Your writing often deals with larger societal concerns. Do you think writers have a responsibility to engage these topics in their work?

I don't really think a writer has any responsibility except to his or her own sense of freedom. That is, I think a writer should just do what seems vital and intense, even if that consists of detailing the way a forest looks at various times of day or tracing the imaginary mental life of a certain poodle. But there would be, I expect, politics even in those two bits of prose. As Orwell said, the idea that politics can be kept out of a piece of writing is, in itself, political. Because what is politics, really, but the personal, enacted multiply? One guy, a tech writer, say, has a crap job where he spends fifteen hours servicing shareholders he has never met, who have spent that same fifteen hours in Cannes, chewing out their household staff, and he goes home to his miserable little apartment, to find that his wife is just as grouchy as he is, from chasing the nine kids around the two tiny rooms all day - that is personal. But when there are other guys with crappy jobs, etc - then it's "political." So I don't really make a distinction between "societal" issues and other sorts. All issues are societal. Even the most "domestic" story, if told beautifully, will resonate outwards towards the big questions (e.g., "Lady With Pet Dog").

Is this something you do consciously in your own work?

So (see #1), the answer would be no. But then I would qualify it a bit – I am aware that certain stories are easier to read politically than others. But I think the only way to write anything is to imagine your character, as well as you're able, to be a real, three-dimensional person, not radically different from yourself. In other words, if I find myself thinking: I am writing a Scathing Critique of Contemporary Capitalism – well, it's time for a break. Be-

cause then the best that you can hope to do is Critique – and fiction is capable of doing so much more than that, which is make mystery, enlarge our sense of healthy ambiguity, etc. In other words, doing social commentary normally implies that you already know what you think, whereas the thrill of fiction, for both reader and writer, has to do with the process of discovering what you think, and also discovering that every easy answer has an equal and opposite contradiction, or complication built into it. So after reading a piece of fiction, the ideal reaction is a sort of humbled befuddlement at the complexities of the world – a renewed interest, a vow to honor that idea from (I think) Sir Thomas Moore: "For the love of God, man, think it is possible you are mistaken."

What writers have influenced you?

Isaac Babel was a big influence, for compression and velocity. Stuart Dybek for a sort of permission-giving: Your life too is the stuff of literature. Tobias Wolff for artistry and integrity and the idea that a great artist could also be a great and responsible human being. Monty Python for the way that absurdism could accrue into something deeper. Beckett for the minimalist ethic. I think the whole question of influence is interesting, because this sort of discussion often assumes a sort of parental model (I got my love of surfing from Dad, but diverged from Dad in that I surf nude, whereas he wore a cardigan). But there is another model, which is more of the Things-I-Saw-At-The-Train-Station Model; we catch a glimpse of something that stays with us forever, giving us permission to access some part of our artistic palette that, without that glimpse, might never have been allowed into play. In this category: I once read the first three pages of that Celine WWI novel and found something about it so exciting (something in the verbal quality of it) that I rushed out of the library and into this whole new artistic phase, writing the story that eventually got me into grad school, where I met my wife, with whom I soon had two kids etc. – but I never went back and read the rest of the book. And from what I know of Celine, he was a turd – anti-Semitic, quasi-delusional. But still, talk about

an influence. It opened up something in my head, along the lines of: "Oh, I didn't know that was considered literary, I can do something sort of like that, and have always wanted to, but didn't know that was allowed."

What's your favorite thing to do when you are avoiding writing?

I really don't do much avoiding of writing these days. I mostly am scrambling to get enough time. It's become more pleasurable and essential as I get older, although I think I've become less efficient at it. So I am more often avoiding everything else in my life, to get to writing.

What's the biggest risk you have ever taken?

I used to take a lot more risks than I do nowadays. I once swam drunk in a river in Sumatra, and got a viral infection. I went on foot to the Cambodian border when the Vietnamese were on the other side, massing for the spring invasion. Nothing bad happened but it was embarrassing, because I walked into a Thai army camp and, also, I was wearing white overalls at the time. I think they might have thought I was a potential "comfort woman." I once jumped 50 feet into a river without knowing how deep it was. I got married with zero money in the bank. I have remained married for sixteen years, still with no money in the bank. As a grad student I once asked Robert Stone, at a party, what the "next big literary thing" was going to be. He was very generous about it but even as the words left my mouth, I felt like doing away with myself, by, possibly, flinging myself into a virally infected river of uncertain depth, while wearing white overalls.

rob mclennan

[FROM *FOURTEEN HEARTS: A GRIST*]

a white plume on standby,
changing shape.

the nature of the inappropriate.

a call out to the south, across
the canal bridge.

snowplows guide down sidewalks,
salt from where to here,

left on my carpet.

finally warm enough to snow, oh
joy
        a desire
shaped on exposed skin.

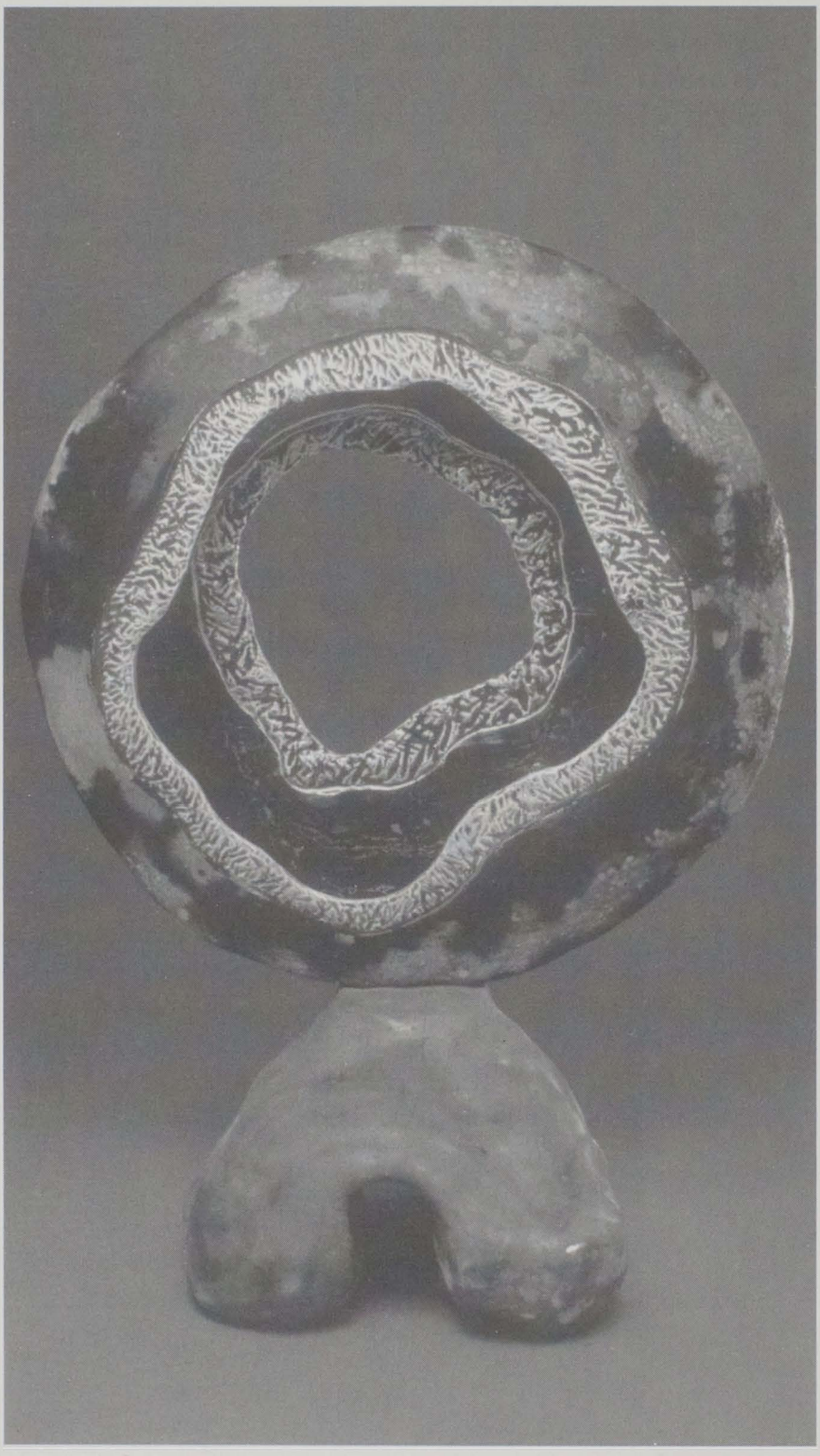
a scarf would make

Frank Giampietro

Another Poem Scoring 4.7 on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Test

My wife will sometimes tell me I'm human.
She's one of those people
who cuts to the green of the cantaloupe rind.
When I step on a caterpillar I like to sing,
"the smallest birds make the prettiest songs."
Critics say my favorite music is great
to listen to while staring at your shoes.
I'll never be smart enough
to be a priest. The best Theologians never mention God.
It's my belief that after you tell
a joke three times you may discontinue
revealing the source. In Venice
they say that ambition is an illness.
On warm days there, in the winter,
it's colder in the cathedrals than it is outside.
I wish I could afford to live in a place with a name like "Oberad."
I'd have a cook and never eat simple-carbohydrates.
It's just possible to heal without justice being served.
A wound closes at the rate of a millimeter per day.
The government subsidizes my son's favorite cartoons.
Anger, in one, is a monster
that continues to grow unless you go with it to be alone.
My son likes it when I draw cathedrals on his chalkboard.
"Bong, bong" he says.
I broke a church bell when I was a teen.
I wore a gaudy Italian-horn necklace then (which means good luck).
Once, in the vestibule of a train en route to Venice,
I stuck a safety pin through my ear.
In Spain they call the summer backpackers, cockroaches.
This summer, three Australian paralysis ticks climbed into my cat's ear.

Now he sleeps and eats in the garage.
This morning, after saying my prayers silently,
I shaved in the shower with my eyes closed.



Candice Rowe

The Heart Is a Muscle Still

THERE IS NOT MUCH POINT in waiting outside Edward's condominium complex because Edward isn't coming back. Edward is dead. He has been dead for twelve days. I am on leave from my job, which involves research for a television station. I'm the one that finds out things like the number of telephone-related injuries in 1985 was 175,000. Or in Alaska, one percent of all people walk to work.

Edward's condo is an old Victorian split up into twenty units. Edward's place is on the first floor, back. Yesterday I actually got into the building by pretending to visit someone else. I rifled through Edward's mail, piled up outside his shellacked oak door, but couldn't bring myself to open his letter from the anesthesiology medical board notifying him of his test results. The most I could do was heft the envelope in one hand, hold it up to the thin sunlight, and place it back down on the sill among the dozens of letters, bills, and advertisements accumulating there.

The only thing left now is to wait for Edward's brother to drive up from Little Falls, New Jersey, to take Edward's worldly goods away forever in the back of a rented truck. This stuff includes a fishing tackle box full of old photographs that document Edward's entire life, including the other women he has been involved with. The picture I most resent is of Edward and a woman who was a ballerina as a child. Her long hand languishes on Edward's shoulder, her feet turned out just so. Arabesque, you fool, I want to yell at the photo. Second position! Besides the tackle box, there's also Edward's black leather jacket, never worn, riddled with silver studs, that was purchased in Cambridge and a bottle green river driver's shirt from L.L. Bean, which I gave Edward last Christmas.

Just eight days ago, I drove to Little Falls, New Jersey, with our best friends Lucia and her husband Rob to bury Edward. On the drive there, a kid on a Harley Davidson roared past us. I was still drunk from the night before and had my shoes off, my feet up on the back seat of the car. I remember

that much. I was wearing a denim jacket and a plaid cotton skirt. I had on a pure white blouse with a Pilgrim collar because Edward would have had a laugh at that. I remember saying to Rob, "Harley Davidson. That's the only motorcycle born in the U.S.A." Rob laughed at that. He was drunk too.

A while later, just like people say, like a dream, I saw the Harley again. It swerved beside a Mason-Dixon tractor trailer. Then the bike changed lanes and a woman with a fantastic flowered hat driving a powder blue Honda tipped the rear wheel of the cycle with her car's bumper and sent it spinning into the wheels of the truck.

Rob said, "Oh, Christ." He pulled our car over to the side of the highway, got out, and started running uphill through all those lanes of stopped traffic. I could see the biker rolling on the pavement. I said to Lucia, "Where's Rob going?" She said, "He's a doctor, Megs. For goddess's sake, you know that."

When Rob got back to the car he told me and Lucia, "That kid is circling the drain." He told us how the state cop had said to him, after Rob had told him the kid needed to be kept warm until the ambulance arrived, "Go down to my cruiser and get the blanket if he needs to be covered up." Rob said to the cop, "I'm a doctor. The patient needs me here. *You* go down to the cruiser and get the damned blanket." Rob slapped the steering wheel and said, "Goddamn kid lost most of his skin."

Rob was frequently edgy. Cocaine. He had a handgun in the glove compartment of his car. I have seen him take it out and drive with it beside him on the console. Lucia is no match for that. She's all natural, no red meat, whole wheat brownies, all cotton undergarments tinted with vegetable dye. She won't even get a tan in the summer. Instead she takes carotene capsules that turn her skin the color of Orangeade.

The rest of the drive to the wake, I remember, Rob and I spent saying things like, "What's with all these Indian names?" referring to the highway signs along the Turnpike. "How well did the Indians fare in Jersey?" And I answered, "Not well. Matter of fact, they lost the World Series." And we would both laugh. Lucia told me to be quiet, put my feet on the floor, and meditate on the immortality of the human soul.

Rob said how the old bastard Edward owed him a lobster dinner from some wager they'd had on a patient's chance of survival, which Edward lost. I said how Edward owed me an engagement ring. Lucia turned up her African mass music tape on the car stereo till we couldn't hear each other talk anymore.

I have to say how ironic it is that Edward had worked his whole short life to get out of New Jersey and then goes and dies and gets stuck there for an eternity, how he made Phi Beta Kappa, how he went away to Colorado to study medicine, how while interning there a machine malfunctioned during a routine operation, I'm thinking elective surgery, but I couldn't swear to it, and a twenty-eight-year-old mother of two lost her entire memory bank. Edward would only say that the machine malfunctioned and that there *was* a supervisor watching him, so how could the mishap be his responsibility? That was as much as I could get out of him regarding the episode. But whenever he mentioned the incident, I felt I was seeing a tiny piece of something scary that made me wince and turn away before I saw more.

A short time after the operating-room mishap, Edward met a guy at a take-out counter. Edward always ordered too much take-out food. Last New Year's Eve I counted seventeen white containers of Chinese on the table in front of the two of us. This guy and Edward became fast friends. Then the guy started borrowing money from Edward, his hunting rifle, stereo equipment, finally threatening Edward with long, rambling letters whenever Edward mentioned the debts. Edward went to the man's house, and when his new friend wouldn't answer the door — Edward insisted he'd seen a long shadow moving across the screen-darkened windows — Edward sprayed the open windows with water from a garden hose.

For this act Edward was arrested one bright Saturday Colorado morning. For this transgression, he had to turn down a two hundred thousand dollar a year job in Princeton, New Jersey, because he couldn't face telling the chief of surgery there that he had a record for criminal mischief in Colorado. When Edward told me the story, he got down on his knees and cried. When he finally came out with it, I couldn't believe the lengths he'd gone to hide the whole thing from his family, friends, and

associates. So unless I say something, that criminal record is another thing that will die in Little Falls, New Jersey, a gray place full of dinette factory warehouses and linoleum showrooms, forever.

As we were walking into the funeral home, I asked Rob if Edward's wrist would still be in a cast. Rob said he didn't know about mortuary science procedures. As a doctor, he dealt only with live people. Edward's wrist *was* still in the cast. The mortuary people had dressed him in a gray suit. He would not have been pleased with his presentation. Already dead for four days, he was puffy looking and the color of taupe-colored nylons. Death bothered Edward. I remember one time he called me after his late shift at Boston City Hospital. "This woman," he said. "Her boyfriend shot her in the head and her brains were dripping out onto the OR floor. The chief of surgery told us we had to do our best to save her. Megs, her brains were on the soles of our shoes."

He didn't cry that often.

When it was my turn to go up to the coffin, Rob held my elbow. It is against Lucia's religious beliefs to view dead bodies, so she had waited in the car with a book of meditations for every occasion. I had this poem that I'd typed up for Edward. It was about selling love and how the poet didn't think she'd trade her lover's love for food or air. That's how I felt then. I put the paper in Edward's pocket, the chest pocket of his gray suit jacket right on top of his still heart.

Rob took me by the arm and lifted me off the pew. He said, "Other people want to see him too, Megs. You have to get up now." As Rob led me toward the door, I announced to all the family and loved ones sitting before me on folding chairs, "The average American spends five years waiting in lines." They looked after us as though we were some fantastic parade float run amok.

Outside the funeral home all the doctors were talking to each other in little clots. They were talking milligrams, chemical reactions, things that leave the ordinary listener out. You had to be a doctor to make any sense of the conversation. I said to Rob, "Are they saying that Edward killed himself?" Rob said, "That's what they're saying." Then he said to me, "Megs, do me a favor.

Don't tell Lucia any of the suicide stuff because then we'll have to listen to her theory of how Edward will have to come back to this life as a sea sponge."

Later that evening Rob and Lucia drove me back to Boston. I thanked them for their hospitality, which included staying at their house in Connecticut the days before the wake, eating eighteen-dollar-a-pound shrimp, drinking good wine, and riding Lucia's Appaloosa named Chinook until Lucia made me get down off her. They left me in Boston, hugging me, promising to visit, but I know I'll probably never see them again. Death changes everything.

That's as close as I came to marrying Edward, a hotshot doctor from Little Falls, New Jersey, who made eight hundred dollars a day medical-freelancing. I almost got the life my mother has always told me I deserved. I almost got to marry Alphonse Edward Zaretsky, who had dropped his legal first name, who left a woman in Colorado with no memory, who was actually a man with a record for criminal mischief in Colorado, a man who couldn't hold an erection if his life depended on it due to the fact that his life depended on hits of epinephrine for his asthma.

Edward Zaretsky was a person whose professional associates believe did not die like the newspaper obits said — of a heart attack — but in fact, medicated himself to the point that his heart stopped beating. Thirty-four years old and right on the verge of launching his sterling career as a cardiac anesthesiologist. That's the thing.

I remember the night Lucia called to tell me he was dead. It was ten minutes past midnight on a Thursday night the week before Easter. Lucia said, "Megs, I have some very bad news." I said, "Edward is dead. Fast cars or fast women?" She said, "Megs, listen to me. He really *is* dead." And I said, "I know. I've been expecting your call." Right at that moment I thought I could actually see a giant sky above me, and in the sky was this little star shooting higher and higher instead of falling.

Then I heard Lucia say, "That's it. We're coming up to Boston to get you. Just sit there. Have some tea. We'll be there in two hours."

While I waited for them I thought about the last time I had heard from Edward. He had called from California and left a message on my answering machine the day of the anesthesiology boards, and he had sounded down. "I did OK, I think," he said. "OK. Some parts OK, some not OK. So what's the worse thing that can happen?" he'd asked. The thing is, with Edward, the worst thing that could happen always did.

His father died before the two of them could go on their big fishing trip to Neptune, New Jersey. If operating room machinery was going to malfunction, it did so when Edward was on duty. If an anesthesiologist has to break a bone, the wrist bone isn't an especially propitious one.

So after the boards, after calling me, Edward went out to a taco restaurant and club with an old friend he'd met at the boards. Edward ate lettuce. In California they put some chemical on the lettuce at salad bars to keep it green and crisp. Some doctors at the wake said that's what killed him, what threw his heart into cardiac overdrive. Edward was a person who spent a decade of his life studying organic chemistry and missing out on life because of it. Edward always told the story of how he missed seeing Frank Zappa sitting at the next table in a Roy Rogers Roast Beef because he had to study for a nutrition exam. Of course he aced the exam. How could that person not know a rule as simple as *always avoid eating the tainted lettuce*?

Then they danced. This I do not think was fair to our relationship. The only time I ever cheated on Edward was with a Marine recruiter who promised to teach me to repel and then backed out by saying I was too fragile. Too fragile? Just last summer my brother and I beat a truck driver and a former commando playing tug of war on my mother's front lawn. My brother and I had those guys, dead still, and my brother who is good at this sort of thing kept saying in my ear, "Baby, don't move, baby, don't move." With one yank, I know it was him because it certainly wasn't me, he jerked the rope suddenly and caught them off guard, pulling them both over their t-shirts on the ground marking the boundary line. They had one hundred and forty pounds on us. We all went out for beers, and I could hardly hold

my glass, my hands bleeding through the bar napkins I kept wrapped around them.

OK. The marine. I was angry. Edward kept disappearing. He'd have a job interview in Wyoming or an out-of-town medical conference. The last conference brochure he'd shown me was full of glossy shots of casino lights and overloaded buffet tables. He held the brochure out to me and said, "Look at this. Doctors can take their wives for free. If you were my wife, you could see Vegas for absolutely nothing." I said, "Are you asking me to marry you?" And he said, "I'm not sure."

So one of the times he was missing I went to a party. A man, who turned out to be the recruiter, asked me to dance. While we were dancing close, he tipped me back and said to shock me, "I shoot Bambies." I said, "I'd like to see that." I never told Edward about the marine, but he was half Cherokee and the most gentlemanly man I'd ever dated. My brother told me, "Never trust a service man, leastwise an Indian serviceman that's been through the Corps' freaking charm school." But late one night, the marine lifted me off the rainy sidewalk so I wouldn't get my feet wet. "You're a china doll," he said into the hair covering my ear, and I couldn't stop the hot wash of feeling his warm breath drew out of me.

Once I rode in his car when he was trying to sign up this poor kid from a slum in Brockton. When the marine ran back into his office for some papers he'd forgotten, I turned to the kid in the back seat and said, "Don't sign up. You're mad at your father, at your choices in life. Go back to school. Get a part-time job. Don't sign up." The kid looked at me, white showing all around the brown of his eyes, and I said, "He looks like a Marine Corps poster boy, doesn't he?" And the kid laughed.

So Edward went to the taco bar with his old friend. This old friend from the University of Colorado was named Higgie. His real name was something like Theodore Parker Higginson, but Edward always called him Higgie. Edward said I could never meet Higgie because I'd like him too much. Higgie and I would gang up on him. We'd both wear faded flannel shirts. We'd open the car doors at red lights and yell, "Footsoldiers of the Imperialist Army, the fucking light is green. Move it!" We'd like each

other too much, this Higgie and I.

Edward liked to be on the move, doing something. That's why he and Higgie went out to celebrate after the boards. Edward took me to a Greek restaurant once and ordered octopus just to say he did. But it tasted like bad tuna, was very chewy, and still had suckers on the tentacles, not to mention the staring, tiny marble-black eyes. Edward pushed it around on his plate and ended up sharing my chicken soup. "Am I adventurous enough for you?" he kept asking me on the drive home.

After Higgie and Edward ate tacos, they danced with women. Edward and I were going out to a wild bar in Kenmore Square one night. I was wearing a white shirt with wide shoulders that showed off a lace camisole underneath. I had come to his condo to pick him up. Edward had totaled his car. For most of the time I had known him, I had to drive him everywhere.

I was with him the night he wrecked his car. We were heading out of his parking lot and we had our headlights off. Edward just hadn't gotten around to turning them on yet. A Jamaican man in an old Plymouth came down Washington Street and plowed right into us. Edward did all the right things to a point. He asked me if I was all right. Then he went over to see about the other driver. He came back and asked me my view of what had just happened. I said, "You were edging out onto a major road, no headlights on, and you were looking at me saying, 'Do you know Joe Jackson's *Memphis, Where the Hell is Memphis?* That's what happened." Edward said to me, "Here's my house key. Go back inside the condo and wait for me there."

Then I knew he'd tell the cops he was a doctor and that the Jamaican, who barely spoke English but hadn't done anything wrong, had hit him. When the cab I called came later to pick me up, I wouldn't kiss Edward goodnight. The next day he called me from Boston City Hospital saying, "Kunevitch and Lau, your whiplash specialist lawyers," and I laughed.

Anyway, when I went in to get him to drive us to the club, he had his pants on, his socks, his shirt falling open. He didn't have on an undershirt. His chest was smooth, hairless, and broad from years of hard breathing. The asthma had worked to his advantage that way. He was barrel-chested with big shoul-

ders. This is a point with me, because I have large shoulders for a woman and am more comfortable beside men with big shoulders. He said, "Does this shirt look all right?" I wrapped my arms around his neck and pressed my tongue into the hard bony spot right behind his ear. He kissed me, and then he pinned my arms behind my back and kissed my throat. We never went out dancing that night. Later he said, "We've been in bed for three hours. Three hours." As though that were a world record or something.

So of course I was angry when I found out later from Lucia how he'd gone out dancing with Higgie. Dancing reminded me of that night.

After dancing and sitting back down to catch his breath, he had the heart attack. Two blocks from a trauma center and in the company of a physician. Once he was in the clutches of the trauma unit, strapped to a stretcher, he said to Higgie, "I am going to die." Not tell Megs I love her. Not tell Megs I wanted to marry her and get the conference rate on the Las Vegas hotel. Tell her I meant to ask her. That the ring is forthcoming now that I've passed my boards and am making eight hundred righteous dollars a day freelancing and even more when my wrist heals completely.

I know I forgot to explain this. Edward, three weeks before he died, broke his wrist. He called me on a Sunday night with the bad news. He'd been skating at Walter Brown arena with an intern when he made a one-point landing on his wrist. The emergency room doctor told him, after examining him, that she could see signs of osteoporosis in the x-rays. His bones were thinning. Thirty-four years old, remember.

Back on that Sunday night, after the fall skating, he called me and I went over to his condo to check on him. His face was red from crying. He was wearing a pink sweater I had never seen before, and seeing that he was blond and fair-skinned, he looked terrible, like some hugely monstrous fake pink flower in forced bloom. I had to keep telling him to keep the cast up, to exercise the fingers to keep up the circulation, don't forget the thumb. He drank enough Benedictine and took enough Codeine to stun a rogue elephant. I said I would stay with him that night, and he

said, "I hope I don't bludgeon you to death with this cast." In the city's crime light glare, the cast looked like a supreme instrument of death. When he left three weeks later for his boards in California, his wrist was still in the cast.

After the wake I called Edward's apartment daily. His answering machine said, in Edward's fake-cheery voice, "I'm in La Jolla presently. As soon as I'm back, I'll be in touch."

I got a letter from Higgie four days after the wake? Nice to meet you, even if so briefly. Too bad under such sad circumstances. He had advice for the bereaved — let us not try to make too much sense of such mysteries like life and untimely death, rather, let us remember Edward the way he was.

See, Higgie, that's my problem. Just who was Edward? This Alphonse at birth who changed his name to Edward. This blue-collar asthmatic who spent his formative years in a hospital for child asthmatics. He once told me a story about the place his family sent him when he was twelve. He was lonely and finally got up enough courage to make a break for freedom, convincing his bunkmate to go along with him. Somehow the boys got down the long halls and past the heavy doors, the gate, and made their way over banks of snow toward freedom. The shortest way, Edward decided, was over a frozen brook. Edward made it across, but the roommate fell through the ice, caught a cold, and just before Christmas died in a blue choking fit. Edward had to stay in that room with the empty bunk above him, a silent recrimination, for a month, until another boy was admitted to the facility.

Higgie, what about this Edward who didn't out and out lie about his past, but didn't tell the truth either? This Edward who spent his life trying to catch up to the likes of Rob and Lucia with their house in Connecticut, their paddock, their eighteen-dollar-a-pound shrimp, yet at the same time wanted to wear flannel shirts like you and I, Higgie, and order the chicken soup?

Higgie, you'll believe me when I tell you that Edward said to me, and this was one of the times he cried, "How can I stay here in Boston with you, Megs, if they (some little suburban hospital) will only offer me ninety thousand? A school bus driver with a record for child molestation makes more than that. You

can't come with me." (He never asked, Higgie.) "But I can fly back from Pennsylvania to see you every time I get time off. Eight hundred dollars a day. I can fly back all the time."

I said, "Your wrist is broken. How will you hold your laryngoscope?" I wanted to ask what about your asthma, your bones as thin as jackstraws? He said to me, and here's our biggest clue, Higgie. "What does any of this matter?" I thought he meant the money, the prestigious positions in distant cities, octopus in trendy ethnic restaurants. I thought he meant nothing could keep us apart. Destiny and all that crap. But he didn't mean that at all.

The day after the wake I remembered something else. Rob, Lucia, Edward and I were all going to a Halloween party last October. I was dressed as a geisha. I had on an antique yellow silk dress and red shoes that tied at the ankle. Lucia had done my hair on the top of my head with calla lilies. I must have looked convincing. A stranger at the bar sent a co-worker into the ladies room after me to tell me he wanted to meet me. I told him I didn't date investment bankers, on principle. Edward was dressed as a rugby player. As the banker was asking me for my phone number, Edward turned away and ordered a gin and tonic with a twist of lime. I gave the banker a fake number.

But before all that, on the way to that party at a posh yacht club on Boston Harbor, Rob saw the flashing blue lights of a police car by the side of the road ahead of us. "Oh, Christ," he said, and reached across Lucia for the glove compartment. We all knew the handgun was in there, beneath the detritus of everyday life. Lucia said, "Rob, don't," and put her hand in front of the latch. "Christ," Rob said again, banging his fist on the steering wheel. Edward said, "Slow down, Buddy." And then we were past the police car and everything was fine again.

Rob pulled over to the side of the road and laughed. He had a flask that he took from the sash of his Ninja costume along with a prescription vial. Lucia said, "I don't need anything," and looked out the window. We were just off the Southeast Expressway, the bad neighborhoods jammed right up next to the pricey Harbor condominiums and yacht clubs.

Edward leaned forward, his hand flat out, and said, "Party

favors." Rob turned to me. I was sitting right behind him. "Let me see your little geisha hand, Megs." He took my hand between his. That reminded me of New Year's Eve when Rob kissed me in front of Lucia and said, "Edward must love kissing you." Rob said, "Your hand is cold, Megs. These babies will make your hands warm." I said, "All right. Just one then." I washed it down with whiskey from the flask.

Later at the party, over salmon-stuffed pea pods, warmed brie with toasted pine nuts, and champagne punch, after the investment banker had tucked my hair stylist's telephone number into the vest of his three piece suit, and Edward had consumed several more gin and tonics, I asked Edward what those pills were. "Inderol," he said. "Heart medicine, medicine for the heart. Good for what ails you."

When he told me that, I remember, I felt my heart suddenly shift in my chest, my heart never feeling more like an inert lump of stew meat, barely rising to the challenge of keeping me alive.

Self Portrait as Fuseli's Imp

A vicious whimsy got hold of my scalp
and the root of each hair, encased in its fatty sheath,
became worthy of attention.
A millennium of that and I was ready for a new voltage.
The Treaty of Homunculi provides some distraction,
though my diplomatic work goes mostly unappreciated.
I do love a good street-lamp, I squat in its glare for hours.
About my ears — the ruddy whorls, the sweet black tendrils
within —
I can say how sound shivers across their private membranes,
and I feast on it for days. By the way, the Bride of Frankenstein
was my idea.
If you sip an elixir of any thought I've ever had,
I feel a sting in my talons, in the stony nubs on my head.
No nerves grow there, it's true, but I can't escape the impression,
and indeed seek it out. It's like being someone else,
someone with skin a few degrees warmer than mine.
One time I dreamed I lived in this apartment with great décor,
sort of Louis Quinze meets the cave paintings of Lascaux.
I was happy. I was also dead,
but still appreciated the landlord's oceanic gentleness.
I woke up content, and often wonder why.
You know, I have always loved jaywalking.
For a long, long time I thought that
was my problem.

Andrew Fox Lillywhite

La Muerte de los Colores

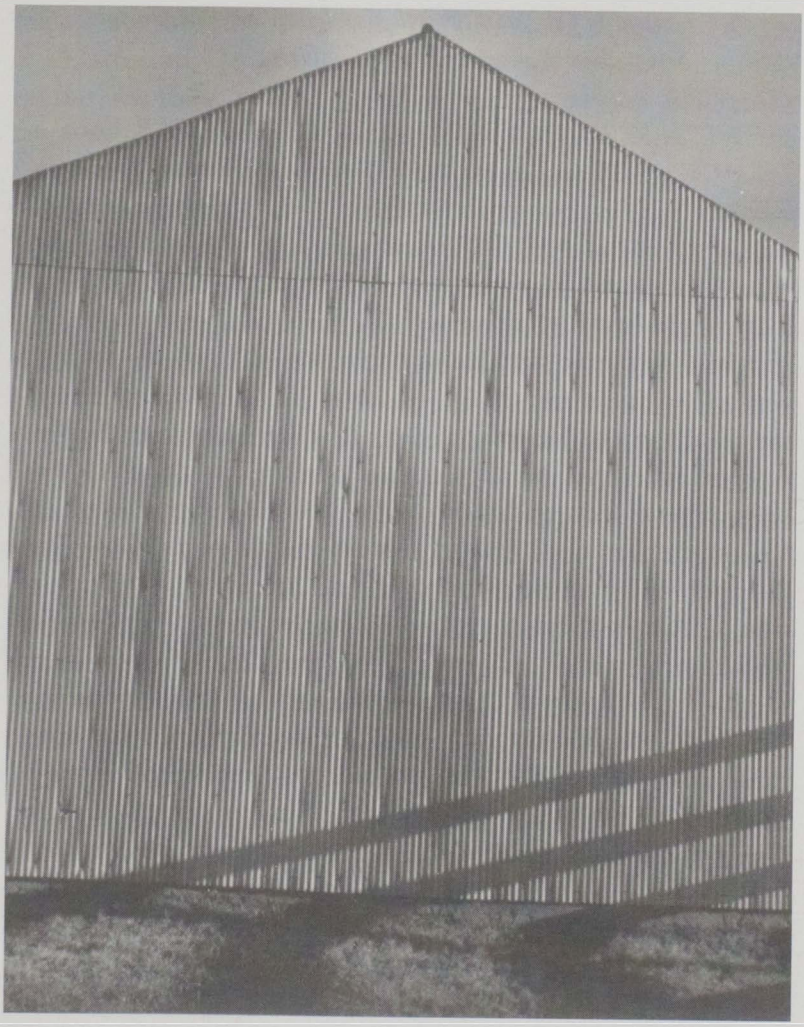
Black ingrown potatoes
Sprouting from the walls
Those beige tint-padded walls

In the tin can
With my gray, congealed
Cream of mushroom soup.

From last night's
Green-bean-crunch casserole.
Spoiling in Aunt Bo's

Dark urine colored Tupperware.
From last year's state carnival.
Where I won a bear.

A taupe bear.
A stuffed one
Named Phyllis.



Richard Hugo on His Poem *What Thou Lovest Well Remains American*

The following was recorded in 1980 at the Lower Columbia Community College in Longview, Washington, during the 5th Annual Poetry Gathering.

THE TITLE POEM FROM THAT PARTICULAR book is called "What Thou Lovest Well Remains American." You remember the first poem about that church where we were all having so much fun? Well, there's a guy I used to go to Sunday school with there — it was a very small congregation, just a few kids — and this guy's name was George. And he was a fat guy and he didn't have very good coordination. And he couldn't play ball with the rest of us, you know, we didn't want him on the team, on the basketball team. And he wasn't very bright. And he lived with his mother and grandmother, and I don't know where George's father was, I never remember seeing him. I guess he was dead or had moved away, I don't know. But George lived with these two women. And during the Depression, somehow they scraped up enough money to buy George trombone lessons. Now, no way was George ever going to learn to play the trombone. You know, after six months he was just kind of squawking on it. Anyone in this room could have learned three times as fast. So George seemed to be kind of a lost ... but he was a harmless kid. You know, you don't make all these distinctions when you're a kid. We liked George.

So, some of us used to go see him — go over to his house, he lived a little farther away from the town than the rest of us, a few blocks. And on the way, we passed a house and there was a woman lived in this house and her name was Jensen. I call George's family Grubski in this poem but that wasn't their name. Anyway, this woman's name was Jensen, as I remember. She was a hermit. You never saw her outside the house. I don't know if you remember what's it's like when you're a little kid, but you make myths out of people like that, not real-

izing that these people are living in terrible fear. They don't want to go outside. I mean, your sense of compassion just isn't there. So we used to go by and she'd have her face to the window like this, looking out. And we'd go a couple more blocks up the hill to George's house.

Now George lived in a really strange house. The front stairs came up over the front door to the second floor and ended at a blank wall. Do you see what I'm saying? In other words, to get into the front door of the house you had to go in behind the front stairs, and there was the entrance to the house. And at one time, George and his mother and grandmother were afflicted with the condition that then in White Center was loosely called Saint Vitus' Dance, but I don't know if that's what it was. I don't know if you know what that condition is, but people flutter and tremble and shake. And it's a terrible condition. And anyway, whatever it was, George recovered and his mother recovered, but the old lady never did recover, and she just went out shaking.

George's mother would welcome us into the house and we'd be standing and greet George and his mother. And the old woman would come in and be shaking hands, and George's mother would say something like "oh, mother, how wonderful that you're joining us. Why don't you entertain us all by sitting down at the piano and playing for us one of your original compositions?" And I don't know if you believe this but that's really what would happen, is this old woman with these shaking hands would sit down and play some wretched tune that she'd written herself.

Well. I don't know if you remember what it's like to be a kid. But I'll tell you something you had when you were a kid and you don't have it anymore — that except for the kids here. You had a great sense of the absurd. Do you remember it? Can you ever remember wanting to laugh like hell at some adult because you just knew this person was ridiculous and you had to repress it? You didn't dare do it? I mean, everybody's had that experience. Well, you can imagine what we were going through at this very moment. I mean we're kids. Here's George's pious mother and George with his big dumb face hanging out. And this old woman with these trembling hands playing this wretched music. And we are trying very hard not to laugh. God, it's so painful

you couldn't believe it. And finally we just couldn't wait, we'd get outside and just burst into laughter, rolling around on the ground. Outside — we managed to hold it, not to embarrass her.

Well, about thirty five years went by and I hadn't thought of these people. I was having a hell of a hot streak writing — this was in the early 70's — oh boy, was I writing. I don't think I'll ever have another one like it. I hope I do. I was just churning out the poems. And a lot of it was pretty good stuff too, for me. I was just looking around for one more poem to write. Anything, anything. And all of a sudden I thought of these people. My God, George and his mother and grandmother. And I looked back and I thought, that was really funny back there. But now I was a lot older and I thought yeah, it was funny alright but there was something sad going on there too, you know? And how did I know this? Well, a lot of time had gone by. And I at one time was a pretty good ball player. I could hold my own in some fairly fast company in Seattle. But I'd gotten fat and I'd lost my reflex and I couldn't play ball with the boys anymore. And I never could play a musical instrument. And I used to be very nervous in front of audiences when I read. I drank very heavily in those days. So my hands used to shake when I read, gave readings. And then what am I about to do? Well, I'm about to recite for you one of my original compositions, that's what I'm about to do. So you see, I think if you think you're so much better than other people, maybe you just haven't lived long enough, you know? Life is a tremendous democracy. It grinds us all down equally.

This is "What Thou Lovest Well Remains American":

Richard Hugo

What Thou Lovest Well Remains American

You remember the name was Jensen. She seemed old
always alone inside, face pasted gray to the window,
and mail never came. Two blocks down, the Grubskis
went insane. George played rotten trombone
Easter when they flew the flag. Wild roses
remind you the roads were gravel and vacant lots
the rule. Poverty was real, wallet and spirit,
and each day slow as church. You remember threadbare
church groups on the corner, howling their faith
at stars, and the violent Holy Rollers
renting that barn for their annual violent sing
and the barn burned down when you came back from war.
Knowing the people you knew then are dead,
you try to believe these roads paved are improved,
the neighbors, moved in while you were away, good-looking,
their dogs well fed. You still have need
to remember lots empty and fern.
Lawns well trimmed remind you of the train
your wife took one day forever, some far empty town,
the odd name you never recall. The time: 6:23.
The day: October 9. The year remains a blur.
You blame this neighborhood for your failure.
In some vague way, the Grubskis degraded you
beyond repair. And you know you must play again
and again Mrs. Jensen pale at her window, must hear
the foul music over the good slide of traffic.
You loved them well and they remain, still with nothing
to do, no money and no will. Loved them, and the gray
that was their disease you carry for extra food
in case you're stranded in some odd empty town
and need hungry lovers for friends, and need feel
you are welcome in the secret club they have formed.

Luxury

KENNY IS WALKING DOWN A STREET, a street in Paris, actually, down a crooked crowded tourist street, walking past a loose three or four American women sauntering in black when — three thousand miles from home, and twenty years later — he smells Jean's perfume again.

Alert, suddenly. The small hairs on his arms stand erect. A picture of her face forms in his mind, the soft skin of her back, the touch. He slows his stride to fall in behind them but he is noticed. The trailing woman looks sharply up at him, a dark angry knot of a face. He has been warned. Still he edges and idles behind them, hoping for another whiff among the morning smells of this tourist street, bakery, sour water, coffee. Which one of these women is wearing it? Four of them together, Kenny's age, from Boston or San Francisco by their clothes. Not Cleveland, anyway. He doesn't care if they notice. He looks carefully at each of their faces — a mother, a rich and beautiful, a Georgia-looking blond with coppery streaks in her hair — to see if Jean has become one of them. Of course of course none of these women is her. Still he follows until they stop at a shop window full of luxury leather and Kenny must either ask them or move along.

Why would it matter, to know the name of this perfume? But it matters, it does, and Kenny calls himself a coward as he walks away. How hard would it be to walk up to them and ask politely: That perfume you're wearing, a person I know used to wear it. Would you mind? Could I bother you? But then he pictures himself sniffing from one to the next like a curious dog, to sniff out which one is wearing it — tries to imagine any sane woman consenting to this, can't.

This isn't the first time. Maybe the seventh.

He keeps walking, dividing the crowds. He has an appointment with his wife — she's here on business, Kenny's along for company — but not for forty-five minutes, and nothing in particular between now and then. He had been looking for a

cafe, he remembers now, some agreeable place in which to read the *International Herald Tribune*. But that was before, he thinks. It feels like a long time ago now.

The trouble with perfume, he thinks, is that there's no language for it, or at least none that he knows. Somebody knows. But for Kenny, there's not even a real relation between the name and the thing named, he's thought for years that this would turn out to be some name he's known since childhood, Shalimar or Chanel or My Sin, by Lanvin (he can hear the television announcer's voice from deep childhood: My Sin, by Lanvin . . .). What does "L'air du Temps" smell like? and how would Kenny know? On the other hand, it can't be anything too popular. Seven — now eight — encounters in twenty years, fewer than one every two years. He may be forgetting one or two. Now it's gone again, he thinks, gone again.

Kenny closes his eyes, trying to shut out the noise and concentrate, trying to bring the perfume back. Not exactly roses but almost roses, and then something else, something dark . . . Instead he gets the touch of Jean's hand: cool, precise fingers. They stayed up all night talking and then they ran out of things to say and then that moment, where something is about to happen and there's nothing to say. The way she looked into his face, cool, evaluating. Before she could decide about him, he reached out and touched the bare skin of her forearm and they both looked down, contemplating the look of this: hand on smooth skin, connection. When she looked up, Kenny kissed her, which — he knew — was what she wanted, what she expected.

That's it: he knew. What happened to that? that sexual ESP, that simply knowing, the words unsaid. Gone gone gone.

And waking in her bed at noon, sunlight, and there was her perfume in the sheets.

Kenny sees that he is on a bridge with a crowd of other people, stopping at the red lights, walking with the green. The bridge has a name, which doesn't seem important to remember. Rive gauche, rive droit. He follows the crowd, wherever they are going, in the spring sunlight. It's March, the leaves are budding out on the trees. The shadows are open and wintry.

It's possible her perfume was French, he thinks, Parisian

— her father had been in the State Department, she had lived in Athens, Barcelona, elsewhere, growing up. She dressed in silks and scarves and real shoes, with heels. She had a dry look, ready to be amused. She was habitually quiet and lived alone. She was loved by her professors. Jean: he assembles her out of facts. Really it's just a colored cloud of feeling, more than he can name.

She was not the love of his life.

She is still present in him, though, a little undissolved lump of regret, mostly asleep or inert but sometimes — as now — springing into movement, the things he did and didn't do. The way that he could simply touch her arm, the way he could bring her almost to come just by kissing her hand, the inside of her hand, tracing the soft lines with his tongue while she shivered next to him on the bed, with her dress on. The power of that, and at the same time the danger: she was not simply there for his pleasure. She wanted something from him. She was teaching him something, the impulsive impatient inconsiderate boy. The way she'd shake and moan and curl around him if he was doing right, like a leaf, he thinks, the bud uncurling. My luxury, she called him. My little luxury.

The night she sent him away, because he had been hiking in the woods all afternoon in the sun and had come straight to her room and he smelled, she said. Go home and take a shower. And then while he was in the shower, in his own apartment, he heard the door open from the hallway and he knew it was her. He hurried through the rest of the shower and came out and she was gone again, the wreckage of his apartment being too much for her. That was a night he was angry with her. He is still angry with her. The fact that she was right, he was wrong, has nothing to do with it.

Standing empty-handed on the bridge while the others pass by. He leans against the stone wall and looks over the edge, like he is looking at the water. Anybody passing by would think so.

This having to qualify for sex, he thinks, this owing something to her.... And yet it was worth it, completely, the delicate flush that would rise from her chest to her throat, he can still feel the hot damp skin in his empty hands. Slowly, gently. This was Jean's world, not Kenny's, but he left it reluctantly, bicycling

home at three in the morning, going to sleep alone with the smell of Jean's perfume on his skin.

In his little bed, alone.

Kenny looks at his hands. Then stands up, inserts himself into the shuffle, follows the sidewalk the rest of the way across the river. This is all history here, the bridge he walks on, the island, the city. At the end of the bridge is a department store, which is not history. A relief. A klezmer band is playing on the sidewalk, clarinet, accordion and guitar, a music with intelligence but no sex. The crowd walks by, dropping a coin sometimes. Kenny stands and listens to them for a moment.

Then Kenny turns and looks through the glass doors of the department store and feels a little shiver, almost fright; because there, just inside the door, is the perfume department itself! He can see the beautiful clerks behind their counters, the thousands of bottles and tiny boxes. He feels a shiver, he doesn't know why. Somewhere in there is Jean's perfume. Not that, he thinks.

But of course he knows, he's known it since the first moment he picked it up on the street: the night he stopped by her house on the way home from the library, stopped by without announcement at ten-thirty at night, and saw neither light nor darkness but candle-light in her windows. Jean had lovers, he was only one of them, that was true from the start, but he had just been thinking about her hands, it's why he left the library, the way she fluttered and shook on the bed next to him while he traced the lifeline with his hand, the lines for marriage and for luck. The way she came with her dress still on.

Kenny alone in bed that night, thinking it's all for me, it's all supposed to be for me. She was fucking giving it away and it was his. And this: a week later, he hadn't gone to her house or picked up the phone, Kenny is studying at the kitchen table when he hears the downstairs door slam and he knows it's her. He turns the light out, though it is still mostly light, seven-thirty in the evening, and he sits there in the gray ghost light of the kitchen and listens to her knock on the door. He knows it's her. She's knows he's in there; his bicycle is chained to the fence outside. He sits at the table thinking, this is what my father would do,

this is exactly what my father would do. All Kenny has to do is stand up and walk over to the door and let her into the apartment, which is now quite clean, he hasn't had anything else to do this last week. All he has to do is let her in, and there will be wine and sex and somebody to talk to. And he wants this, he knows it. He wants what Jean has got, and she's ready to give it to him. But this hot little boil of anger won't let him move. He sits there, trying not to breathe, while she knocks for the third time and then — without giving him time to answer — turns and down the stairs and out into the street again. By then Kenny is at the window, watching Jean in her Spring dress walk away, down the sidewalk, carrying under her arm the bottle of wine in its paper bag.

He has done so much to be forgiven for.

My wife, he thinks. He tips a coin into the open violin case and steps inside, through the glass doors and into the thousand different scents, spicy and floral, citrus and cinnamon, wood and ivy and rot and roses, to look for a little something for his wife.

Gary Joseph Cohen

Taxonomy

The street is made
a saucy river by
mud, broken trees,

all the hungry pieces
sailing in the gutter
with the speed of a chimney

swift. High tension
wires slacken
beneath swollen clouds.

Larch in slapstick fits
lift their yellow skirts
for horny wind.

Tonight, I become
a serpent of trains
whistling between rain sheets,

sprouting wheels
and carrying on
slippery tracks two of every animal.

As If Looking Out from Inside a Strong Wind

There ought to be a way
back in, air-holes, a book of codes
& signals — or they ought
to drive a rail-spike

someplace vital, bind
the hands & ankles. You're
wobbling over a point
on a line, a rupture

in the sequence meant
to end an important
event — but the rupture keeps
finding methods of

mending itself, renewing its
circumstances in the drive to learn
what it stands for. Until now
survival was legible

only in sacrifice: you
had to expect to witness
the burial, but it
wasn't bad. Those were

your own hands
blooming from the ground.
The mood was grand
suspicion proved

in the neatness of vanishing. So many
people say their first
erotic understanding happened
in the attic & they didn't

see a thing. Do you
think it was a spook,
or something from your own
body coming

back to you? I knew
this other woman — this
is different — who said she saw two
loose heads rolling

toward her on the blanket.
They spoke a strange
language which was actually
this language, speeded up.

I wonder what you're made to remember, finally.
She built windmills, &
there were awful splinters in the soft
parts of her hands.

Note on Artwork in *CutBank 60*

All artwork featured in *CutBank 60* was created by Montana artists and is the result of a cover art competition sponsored by *CutBank* and the Art Museum of Missoula. The competition was juried by Cathryn Mallory, Director of the University Gallery of Visual Arts and Co-Chair of the University of Montana Art Department. Art shown in this issue will also be on exhibit at the Art Museum of Missoula during the 2003 Montana Festival of the Book. The Festival, which runs September 18-20, will also feature a reading by authors previously published in *CutBank*.

CutBank wishes to thank all Montana artists who submitted work to the competition. We would also like to thank Cathryn Mallory, the Art Museum of Missoula, and the Montana Committee for the Humanities and Festival of the Book.

Winners of the 2003 *CutBank* Cover Art Competition:

R. David Wilson "Honduras #2" (Cover)

Orville Chigbrow "Through the Looking Glass"
Jeneese Hilton "Wasteland" and "Nevermore"
Ellen Ornitz "Blind Faith"
Elizabeth Rose "For the People"
David J. Spear "The Shed, October 2002"
Howard Zankner "The Homeplace"

CONTRIBUTORS

Lisa Beskin's work has appeared or is forthcoming in *jubilat*, *FIELD*, the *Boston Review*, *Crazyhorse*, and other places. She teaches English and creative writing at Mount Holyoke College and was thrilled recently to learn that a third *Terminator* film will be out soon.

Ian Bickford spent most of last year on tour with the German rock band Flüsh. Nowadays he can be found with his sister playing banjo and saw on street corners in Los Angeles.

Kevin Canty is the author of four books, most recently *Honeymoon and Other Stories* (Doubleday, 2001). He teaches in the MFA program at the University of Montana in Missoula.

Orville Chigbrow has lived in Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Burma, Tunisia, the People's Republic of China, and Germany. The creativity and the art of the peoples in those countries left a lasting impression. He returned to Montana in 2000 to study ceramics at the University of Montana in Missoula. Orville has pieces in the University of Montana's Permanent Collection as well as in the homes of private collectors.

Gary Joseph Cohen has taught media and integrative arts at New York University, The Trinity School (Manhattan), and the University of the Arts. Poems from his manuscript, "Field Work," have recently been published in *Spinning Jenny*, *Blueline*, *The Minetta Review*, and others. He is the Spring 2003, Badlands National Park Writer-in-Residence, in South Dakota.

David J. Daniels is editor of *Indiana Review* and a former Stadler Poetry Fellow at Bucknell University. New work is forthcoming in *Gulf Coast.*

Frank Giampietro's poems have been published or are forthcoming in journals including *Barrow Street, MARGIE: The American Journal of Poetry, Tulane Review, 32 Poems, Homestead Review, Diner,*

and *Poetry Bone.* His poem "The Afterlife" is nominated for a 2003 Pushcart Prize. He is a contributing editor for *Hunger Mountain: the Vermont College Journal of Arts and Letters.*

Saskia Hamilton was born in Washington, D.C., in 1967. She is the author of *As for Dream* (Graywolf, 2001).

Jeneese Hilton was born on the Blackfeet Reservation and currently lives in St. Ignatius, Montana. Hilton has an MFA from the University of Colorado, Boulder; a BA from Montana State University, Bozeman; and has studied art in Mexico. She has shown her work in museums throughout Montana, as well as in Colorado, North Dakota, and in Germany.

Richard Hugo (1923-1982) Served as Professor and Director of the Creative Writing Program at the University of Montana from 1971-1982. His is the author of *The Lady in Kicking Horse Reservoir*, *What Thou Lovest Well Remains American*, and *The Triggering Town,* as well as many other works. Throughout the course of his career, he received a Rockefeller Fellowship for Creative Writing, a Roethke Poetry Award, a Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Fellowship, and an Academy of American Poets Fellowship. Among his many accomplishments, his work was nominated for two Pulitzer Prizes and two National Book Awards. He was instrumental in the founding of *CutBank* in 1973.

Alex Lemon lives and writes in Saint Paul, Minnesota.

Andrew Fox Lillywhite is currently a student in Baltimore, completing his first poetry manuscript.

rob mclennan is a Canadian poet living in Ottawa, Ontario. His 8th trade collection is *red earth* (Black Moss) and he is the editor of various things, including *side/lines: a new canadian poetics* (Insomniac Press) and *Groundswell: the best of above/ground press, 1993-2003* (Broken Jaw Press). His clever website is at www.track0.com/rob_mclennan.

Patrick Moran's poems, translations and essays have appeared in a variety of magazines and journals including *The New Republic*, *Prairie Schooner, The Green Mountain Review* and *Chelsea.* He is currently a member of the Literatures and Languages Dept. at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater.

Ellen Ornitz is a figurative ceramic and mixed media artist who has lived in the Gallatin Valley for thirty years. She recently exhibited her sculpture at Paris Gibson Square Museum of Art in Great Falls, the Holter Museum of Art in Helena and the Art Museum in Missoula. In addition to her work as a sculptor, she curates the exhibits and education programs for the Emerson Center for the Arts and Culture in Bozeman, Montana.

Elizabeth Rose holds a BA from the University of Montana-Missoula, with a major in Art and a minor in Wilderness Studies. Her awards include the Scholastic National Art Competition Silver Award for photography, two National American Vision Awards for multimedia, and Gold Awards for drawing, painting, photography, and printmaking. Her work has been used in posters for plays, the cover of a regional newspaper, in newspaper articles, and has been displayed in banks, malls, universities, public murals, and in juried shows for exhibit in several major cities.

Candice Rowe has published short stories, essays and a chapbook of poems. She is the recipient of a Massachusetts Cultural Council grant for her fiction.

George Saunders is the author of the short story collections *CivilWarLand in Bad Decline* and *Pastoralia*, and the children's book, *The Very Persistent Gappers of Frip*. He teaches in the Creative Writing Program at Syracuse University.

Lacy Schutz's poetry has appeared in all the usual places. She plays the saw and whistles in various experimental rock bands, including the German supergroup, Flüsh, and most recently in the newly formed, Los Angeles based Billy's Ass.

Curtis Smith's stories have appeared in over two dozen literary journals including recent issues of *American Literary Review, Greensboro Review, South Dakota Review,* and *West Branch.* His story collections, *Placing Ourselves Among the Living* and *In the Jukebox Light,* are available from March Street Press. His novel, *An Unadorned Life*, is forthcoming from Neshui Press.

David J. Spear is a photographer and educator. His work has been exhibited in Europe and throughout the United States. He is the author of the monograph, *Gas Smells But Not Like Skunks* (1991). Publication credits include among others the *New York Times Magazine, German Geo,* and the *Columbia Journalism Review.* In 2000 he received the Howard Chapnik Grant and in 1995 the Ernst Haas Photography Educator of the year Award. From 1989-2000 he was an instructor in the Photography & Imaging and Undergraduate Film & Television Departments, Tisch School of the Arts at New York University. In 1985 he developed the International Center of Photography's Community Outreach Program for underserved communities of New York City and was primary instructor through 1997. In June 2000 he relocated to Polson, Montana. In addition to his own work he continues to develop a wide range of photography based programming for youth and the elderly in the United States and Europe. He is currently working on the Flathead Reservation building outreach projects for rural youth. He is a Montana Arts Council teaching artist and is a part-time instructor at Salish Kootenai College.

Tom Stoner has been published in *Another Chicago Magazine, Bitter Oleander Press,* and *New Authors' Journal.* He has written a novel, *Amy by Tuesday*, and is working on his second book titled *The Comfort of Our Kind.*

Daneen Wardrop's poems have appeared or are forthcoming in such magazines as *Seneca Review, TriQuarterly, Epoch, Beloit Poetry Journal,* and *Michigan Quarterly Review.* Her critical work includes two books, *Emily Dickinson's Gothic* and *Word, Birth, and Culture: the Poetry of Poe, Whitman, and Dickinson,* as well as numerous

articles in journals such as *Texas Studies in Literature and Language*, *Emerson Society Quarterly*, and *African American Review*. She teaches at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo.

R. David Wilson is a native Montanan who now makes his home in Missoula, where he works as an artist and teacher. He holds a master's degree from the University of Montana in Latin American Literature and History with a focus on Mexico. His work has shown in Missoula and Guanajuato, Mexico, and a collection of work, "Platicando con la Virgin," was recently on display in the Meson de Poetas gallery in Guanajuato, Mexico.

Howard Zankner is an artist living in Billings, Montana. His work has recently shown at the Custer County Museum in Miles City, Montana, as well as in the Framehut Gallery in Billings. He is a 1959 graduate of Corvallis High School, located on the east side of the Bitterroot Valley. "The Homeplace," included in this issue, grew out of Zankner's time spent in the Bitterroot.

Guidelines for Artists and Writers

CutBank is interested in art, poetry, and fiction of high quality and serious intent. We regularly print work by both well-known and previously unpublished artists.

We accept submissions from August 15 until March 15. Deadline for the spring issue is November 15; deadline for the fall issue is March 15.

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Include a stamped, self-addressed envelope for response or return of submitted material.

Manuscripts must be typed and paginated, with the author's name on each page. We encourage the use of paper clips over staples.

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Please address all submissions to the appropriate editor – poetry, fiction, or art – at the following address:

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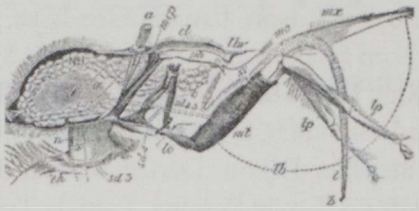

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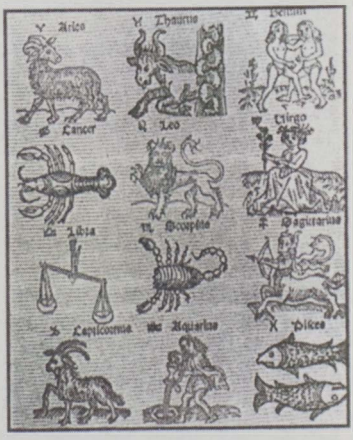

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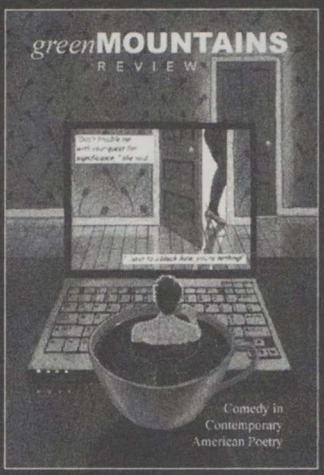

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